



# AZARBAIJAN XI. MUSIC OF AZARBAIJAN

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## Azarbaijan

### xi. Music of Azarbaijan

*History.* The art music of Azarbaijan is connected with the Irano-Arabo-Turkish art of the *maqām*, of which the great theoreticians were notably Šafī-al-dīn Ormavī (d. 693/1294) and ‘Abd-al-Qāder b. Ġaybī Marāġī (d. 838/1435), who were originally from Urmia and Marāġa in Azarbaijan. According to Hajibekov, this tradition collapsed at the end of the fourteenth century (with the Mongol rule), and subsequently each national group reconstructed its own system from the debris (1945, p. 18). The names were preserved, but the realities to which they applied varied from one tradition to another. In the same way the old rhythmic patterns (*oşūl*) disappeared in favor of several simple formulas, mainly in 6/8 and 4/4. It seems, however, more correct to locate the break in the traditional chain of transmission in the 12th/18th century. This period was followed, at the beginning of the 13th/19th century, by a revival, in the course of which the remains of the old system were enriched by popular contributions. In the course of this evolution the art music of Azarbaijan remained intimately linked with that of Iran, to which it is still very close. In the absence of documents, this process of revival still remains quite obscure, but it may be located in the southwest and northwest of Iran. In the northwest, it was particularly the town of Šūša in the Qarabāġ



mountains that was the focus of musical life, but it was at Tiflis that Caucasian musicians found the widest audience. Since the beginning of the century the most active musical center has been Baku.

The Iranian elements in the development of the Azeri tradition were numerous, as is shown by modern terminology (*čahār mežrāb*, *bardāšt*), as well as by certain pieces in the repertoire, recent *gūša* and *maqām* that have Iranian names (Bayāt-e Šīrāz, Šūštar, Delkaš, Šekasta-ye Fārs, Bayāt-e Qājār). Conversely, Azarbaijani elements are found in Iranian music, particularly in dance pieces (*reng*). (See also M. Rezvani, *Le théâtre et la danse en Iran*, Paris, 1962, p. 149.) Azeri art music is also played in other regions of the Caucasus, especially among the Armenians, who have adopted the system of *maqām* and the instruments *kamānča* and *tār*. Aside from these recent and older Iranian elements (the majority of the names of the *maqām* are already found in such Safavid sources as *Behjat al-rūh*, attributed to ‘Abd-al-Mo’men b. Šafī-al-dīn), a certain number of *maqām* and melodic patterns are typically Azeri or have gradually become so (e.g. Segāh, Čārgāh, Welāyetī, Qaṭār, Mobarqa’, and Kord-Šahnāz).

The musical traditions of Azarbaijan were already distinct from those of the area now known as Soviet Azarbaijan, but they became definitively separated toward the end of the 13th/19th century, with Iranian Azarbaijan opting for the purely Iranian style. Subsequently the music of the Soviet Azarbaijan underwent a period of Western acculturation marked by the reduction of the seventeen intervals in the octave to twelve tempered half tones, the integration of Western instruments, polyphony, and orchestration. On the other hand, a music that is Western in form but national in style developed, integrating such traditional elements as instruments (*tār*, *kamānča*, *daf*, and *bālamān*), rhythms, modes, and melodies. The founder of this new school was Hajibekov (1895-1948).

Ultimately acculturation has not deeply affected the old music, which is still performed by great interpreters faithful to their tradition. In the popular domain, the *‘āšeq* bards have never stopped singing in cafes and at family celebrations, accompanying themselves on the *sāz* (*čogūr* in Azarbaijani Persian) and also accompanied by the reed flute (*bālamān*) and the tambourine (*qawan[w]āl*).

*Bases of Azeri music.* The scales in Azeri music are constructed from the following intervals, reproducing the octave division on the neck of the *tār* lute:



see [Chart 1](#).

Other, more abstract divisions are given in *Grove's Dictionary of Music*. This scale, which incorporates popular elements (the *'āšeq* tradition), is distinct from the Persian, Turkish, and Arab traditions. It may have been inspired by that of Ṣafī-al-dīn, whom the Azeris knew. (In the 13th/19th century Ḥājjī Sayyed Aḥmad Qarabāgī of Šūša compiled a small work on musical terms, entitled *Wożūḥ al-aḡrām*, from older sources.)

The art music tradition transmitted through several generations in the Mansurov family includes twelve principal modes (Rašt, Māhūr-e hendī, Segāh-Zābol, Čārgāh, Homāyūn, Šūštar, Bayāt-e Šīrāz, Šūr, Bayāt-e Kord, Bayāt-e Qājār, Rahāb, Navā-Nišāpūr) and ten secondary modes (Delkaš, Kord-Šahnāz, Dogāh, Qaṭār, Ešfahān, Čobān Bayātī, Orta-Māhūr, Orta-Segāh, Kārej-Segāh, Mīrzā Ḥosayn-Segāh, the last four being variants of Māhūr and Segāh). Beside these a certain number of small *maqāms*, generally played within the framework of a more important *maqām*, can be mentioned: Ḥosaynī, Welāyatī, Kojasta, Šekasta-ye Fārs, 'Erāq, Panjgāh, Rāk, Sāranj, Zābol, Basta-Negār, Ḥasār, Mokālef, Manšūrī, 'Oššāq, Samā-ye Šams, Mobarqa', Rahāb, Ḥejāz, Daštī.

The majority of these *maqāms* can be taken as types of such modal compositions as the rhythmic introduction to a mode (*darāmad*), songs (*tašnīf*), and dance tunes (*reng*, *derenga*). Finally, there are about 100 melodic types (*šo'ba* and *gūša*) that never serve as modal patterns for compositions but are interpreted in the course of development of the principal *maqām*. Some of them are rhythmically unmarked melodies; others are rhythmic transitions. Each of the twelve great *maqāms* includes between ten and twenty of these sequences, each of which has a name. Altogether they constitute an ideal repertoire, serving as a basis for improvisation and composition, which is quite comparable to the Persian *radīf* and embodies the originality of this system in relation to neighboring traditions.

A certain number of established classical compositions for voice and instruments, the *zarbī maqāmlar*, stand outside the range of the *maqām*. They are Arazbāra, Oṭmānlī (or Mānī), Owšār, Heyrātī, Heyrātī-Kābolī (instrumental), 'Erāq-Kābolī, Samā-ye Šams, Manšūrīya, Ḥaydarī, and Ozzāl-Žarbī.

For a music sample, see [Chahārgāh](#).



For a music sample, see [Šahnāz](#).

For a music sample, see [Segāh Yatim](#).

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